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ABSTRACT

This paper analyzes the teaching practice of one of the authors and articulates the role of such reflexive analysis in the practice of professors of teacher education. The study extends the recommendation that teachers reflect on their practice to include the relationship between personal educational experiences of teacher educators and their practice as professionals. Elements of the teacher's life and work were explored in relation to three themes which link her pedagogy with her personal history: the role of context in facilitating educative experiences; self-directed and shared responsibility for learning; and perspectives on knowing, teaching, and learning. This descriptive exploration provides the context for a discussion of some issues and dilemmas faced by teacher educator-researchers who engage in autobiographical, self-study research. The dual role of self-study as a form of professional development and as a research vehicle for enhancing understanding of university teacher educators and their work is considered. (Contains 12 references.) (JPB)

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TEACHING AS AUTOBIOGRAPHY: CONNECTING THE PERSONAL AND THE PROFESSIONAL IN THE ACADEMY

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TEACHING AS AUTOBIOGRAPHY: CONNECTING THE PERSONAL AND THE PROFESSIONAL IN THE ACADEMY

Madeleine Trapedo–Dworsky and Ardra L. Cole

> [It is important to] understand what principles and patterns have been operative in one's educational life, [in order to] achiev[e] a more profound understanding of one's own educational experience, as well as [to] illuminat[e] parts of the inner world and deepen[] one's self–understanding generally. (Pinar 1975, p. 389)

This paper is at once an analysis of teaching practice and an articulation of the role of such reflexive analysis in the practice of professors of teacher education. It is also a research report. The paper, and the research upon which it is based, represents a collaborative effort of a professor of teacher education and a researcher who joined together in a life history study of professorial practice. Because one of us (Ardra) is also the subject of the paper (and study), the work could be characterized as a collaborative autobiography (Butt, Raymond, McCue, & Yamagashi, 1992) or, in Ayers' (1989) terms, as an autobiographical study of teaching. And, because it is autobiographical, it can also be characterized as a self-study (see, Russell & Korthagen, 1995).

A rationale for the systematic study of teaching practice is consistent with the central underpinning of the now widely accepted inquiry approach to teacher education, in which teachers at any or all points of their careers are exhorted to reflect on (and thereby better understand) their practice. This line of thinking is extended in this paper to include the relationship between the personal educational experiences of teacher educators and their practice as professionals. In our study of professorial practice, we explored numerous and varied elements of Ardra's life and work. In this paper, we focus on one element of Ardra's practice–her teaching–and

explore three themes that link her pedagogy with her personal history. This descriptive exploration provides the context for a discussion of some of the issues and dilemmas faced by teacher educator- researchers who engage in autobiographical, self-study research. We consider, within the context of the academy, the dual role of self-study as a form of professional development and as a research vehicle for enhancing understanding of university teacher educators and their work.

Our autobiographical study of professorial practice took place over a three–year period. Although, overall, our research has been a collaborative effort of shared responsibility and decision making, Madeleine took primary responsibility for facilitating information gathering. She conducted a series of audio tape-recorded life history interviews, periodic classroom observations (some of which were audio tape-recorded), a year–long period of participant observation in one graduate course, and audio tape-recorded conversations based on her classroom observations. Course outlines, student evaluations, and Ardra's personal–professional writing were additional sources of information.

Individually, we engaged in a systematic thematic analysis of relevant information which we then merged through a process of collaborative interpretation. Our aim (and an outcome) is "a meaningful narrative text that describes and links together influences, events, people, and experiences that contribute to the creation of the teacher [educator] as she finds herself today" (Ayers, 1989, p. 137). We re-present our study of teaching in a form that reflects the process through which it was conducted–in dialogue. Excerpts from our conversations, including our interpretive talks, form the basis for the narrative text that elucidates the meaning embedded in and derived from our study of teaching practice. Three of the themes (also interpreted as values and beliefs underpinning practice) which emerged through collaborative interpretation provide an organizing framework for our re-

presentation. They are: the role of context in facilitating educative experiences; self-directed and shared responsibility for learning; and, perspectives on knowing, teaching, and learning. We vary the format of the paper to capture different aspects of our analysis. Sometimes it takes the form of a descriptive narrative; other times we re–present lengthy excerpts from some of our conversations.

Teaching as Autobiography

To introduce Ardra's teaching and lay the foundation for an interpretive analysis, we present a short narrative written by Madeleine. For this composition, Madeleine primarily drew on information gathered during her participant observations in one of Ardra's graduate courses, on our conversations about teaching, and on written supplementary information such as course outlines, reading lists, and written comments from students. In this narrative, she attempts to recapture the essence of the learning experience in one of Ardra's classes and accurately reflect the dynamic process between Ardra and the twenty or so students in this class. The majority of the class were doctoral students in the area of teaching, eager to proceed with their thesis research and gain a secure understanding of the epistemological basis of qualitative research. With students so close to achieving their academic goal, their sense of purpose and a love for learning made their responsiveness to Ardra's pedagogy understandable. After Madeleine completed the narrative, she asked two students from the class to read it for purposes of validation.

The purpose of the narrative is twofold: it characterizes Ardra's teaching practice, and describes the learning process that occurs during one of her courses; and it introduces the essential personal history-based themes that highlight her pedagogy. This story provides the foundation for a subsequent analysis of her practice in which, together, we identify and examine three overarching themes: the role of context in the facilitation of learning; self–directed and shared responsibility for learning; and, perspectives on knowing, teaching and learning.

A Passion for Learning

Thursday soon becomes the favourite day of the week, one eagerly anticipated by Ardra's students. "Each Thursday morning was a heuristic discovery of another weekly journey through the readings, different phases of thesis work, or just life," remarked one student. The course, "Perspectives in Qualitative Research," instead of being dull and theoretical as one might expect, gains a mystique all of its own as students congratulate themselves on having won a coveted spot in this seminar class. "She's very good, you know," someone whispers during one of the classes I sat in on. Ardra's passion for learning becomes contagious. A sense of commitment to learning pervades and unifies those who are present.

Ardra establishes a supportive and sensitive atmosphere that becomes a forum for discussion and the sharing of knowledge, the management of anxiety and uncertainty about the doctoral journey, and for acknowledging the "messiness" of qualitative research. She displays a consistency in creating a safe environment in which the students feel sufficiently confident to explore a more process–based, experiential style of learning and knowing. Such an atmosphere encourages the students to take responsibility for their own learning. They frequently comment on "the learning culture" created in the class. One student remarked that Ardra "created an environment where we learn from one another and support one another simultaneously."

By maintaining a close watch on the group process, with empathy and alertness to all the students, Ardra invites some of the more reticent ones to participate in the discussion. "To me it is not so vital that every single [student] contributes. What is important is that I know where they are, and I know that they are engaged in some way . . . that is meaningful. Sometimes the non–verbal cues are not enough for me and I need to check" (Ardra, Interview, October 20, 1993). Ardra asks facilitating questions that are designed to draw group members into

discussion. She seldom answers questions directly. Instead, she poses another question to the group, and yet another. Creatively, the students seek their own solutions and thus take responsibility for their learning. Finally, Ardra draws threads from various conversations, makes connections, and then gives back a response co–constructed through discussion. Occasionally, the appropriate and non–manipulative disclosure of her experiences as a teacher and researcher, and the risk involved in exposing some of her own vulnerabilities, encourage a willingness from the students to draw upon their own wealth of experiential knowledge. "[It is necessary] to reinforce and underscore the absolute importance of personal engagement" (Ardra, Interview, November, 20 1993). Ardra does not appear to teach, yet students learn!

Teacher and students alike engage in a dynamic, interactive learning process. Everyone has a role to perform and responsibilities to fulfil for the learning process to be considered effective. Ardra places critical importance on the role of self–directed and shared responsibility for learning. This type of learning forms the cornerstone of Ardra's dedication to the learning process, and derives from her own strongly developed sense of independence and responsibility. She expects no less from her students. The course has the reputation for being a "heavy" one; no slouchers ever enrol here! Students groan at the heavy reading load, yet so strong is their commitment to learning, that they realize the need to plunge directly into the stack of articles, papers, and books. "I feel fortunate to have been exposed to such up to date material," articulated one student. The careful organization of the readings ensures that the different ways of knowing become simplified into smaller, more manageable components. Meaning can then be made more easily from the many abstract concepts.

The learning format varies. As Ardra indicates in her course outline, "Sometimes we will work in small groups or pairs but, generally, I would like us to

struggle along as a group. The large group is a place for us to engage in 'real talk' (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tartule, 1986, p. 145) about research methods that includes 'discourse and exploration, talking and listening, questions, argument, speculation, and sharing.'" Sometimes groups of approximately two to three students form where the talks begun in the large group continue within a smaller, more personal context. Later the groups reconvene, and students contribute their perspectives on critical themes under discussion. Integral to all this activity is the continuation of a secure and productive learning environment where respect for individuality and the principle of negotiation reigns.

The spirited and well–informed discussions in both small and large groups emerge both from the readings and the students' researching experiences, and provide a focus to the learning process. The dialectical nature of learning demands self–directed and motivated learners. Ardra and the students together advance the dynamics of the group. There exists a rhythm and energy to the learning process expressed by the hum of the activities, where the students enthusiastically contribute their unique perspectives, learnings, and ways of knowing. Another student commented, "We all respect one another's style, rhythm, and humour within a safe environment." This environment promotes a willingness to examine different forms of knowledge and ways of knowledge.

In this course, Ardra challenges mainstream epistemology and research. She urges the students to think about research in a more humanistic and authentic way, from the perspective of an alternative research paradigm. For many who have been socialized in traditional research, this encompasses a complete reconceptualization and re–evaluation of what research means. Slowly, as the term progresses, some begin to cast off deeply embedded ideas that the only worthwhile ways of knowing derive from a positivistic stance; tentatively they explore alternative forms of knowledge construction and representation. For some students, challenging

traditional perspectives through qualitative research often proves threatening. They experience extreme anxiety and doubt about the acceptability of their thesis research and their competence as researchers. Others, already immersed in qualitative research, clarify the assumptions that underlie their research, confident about the merit of their work. Ardra encourages students to unleash their creativity, value their own experience, knowledge, and judgement, and in so doing to place less emphasis on outside authorities. One student commented, "In this course, our process takes precedence; the readings provide useful maps and are great sources for quotations by those who have already travelled a path like the one we are on." Above all, she urges them to write, write, write! "What is really so important is documentation of and reflection on the [research] process" (Ardra, Interview, November 20, 1993).

In her challenge of traditional conceptions of learning, Ardra clarifies the connection between the personal and the professional, the person and the researcher–an assumption that underlies her own practice. She encourages students to validate their experiences and come to rely on themselves and each other as knowers in the learning process. In a secure psychological space, knowledge becomes more personalized as an integrated part of the self; in this class, knowledge does not exist only as a theoretical abstraction. The students talk about issues related to their research, to their work in classrooms, and about stories in their personal lives. Ardra synthesizes these diverse topics into themes that relate directly to the particular aspect of qualitative research explored that day. This linking of knowledge and experience brings a coherence and unity to learning, where the process and content of the discussion are inextricably intertwined. "I have learned so much about research, about myself, and about the world," a student wrote.

Through the creation of a milieu that promotes learning, the students re–examine their pursuit of knowledge, and explore and reflect on new ways of knowing. Ardra provides the context and the freedom for the students to work independently and to value the process of learning and not merely the acquisition of knowledge. This belief stems from her personal value system and underlies her pedagogy. This assumption contrasts strongly with the prior experience of many students in an hierarchical institution like a university, where most work is goal– oriented, and where learning usually focuses on the grade and not on the process.

Personal and Professional Connections

In the following section, both our voices are heard. Madeleine presents a narrative commentary that weaves together lengthy excerpts from our life-history interviews and conversations about teaching. In the excerpts Ardra also makes reference to courses other than the one featured in the previous descriptive narrative. We examine three predominant themes that emerged through a process of collaborative interpretation. We consider these themes as foundational in that they reflect the "web of connections which draws self and [teaching] world together in one evolving gestalt" (Abbs, 1976, p. 148). In our interpretation we trace these themes to their personal history–based roots, and in so doing uncover the "domain assumptions" (Pinar, 1981) that underlie Ardra's teaching practice. This kind of analysis exemplifies the notion of teaching as an autobiographical project.

The Role of Context in Facilitating Learning

Ardra's beliefs and values as a teacher educator originate from her personal educational experiences. These experiences provided the basis for her interest in the problems faced by students and teachers alike, in the broader educational context. From an early age, Ardra became aware of the often oppressive and alienating nature of schools as "places of failure rather than learning." In our conversations she drew parallels between her own experiences and those of many teachers for whom

schools also foster oppression. Her background as student and teacher caused her to seriously consider the need for safe learning environments, and to explore the conditions that prevent teachers from teaching in ways that decrease oppression and enhance enlightenment.

> *I feel very strongly that classrooms and learning situations need to be safe places. With the exception of grade* 10 *English class where I vividly remember the teacher ridiculing me for asking a question, school was always a safe place for me. I remember, though, being very mindful of those for whom it was not. I used to feel embarrassed, humiliated or hurt right along with those who, for one reason or another, had difficulty learning. And then later, as a teacher of teenagers in conflict with the law, I was constantly reminded of how alienating schools and classrooms are to so many people. For those kids in particular, it seemed like school had the potential to offer a respite from lives otherwise filled with uncertainty and adversity; yet, for many, schools were places of failure rather than learning. . . . For teachers, too, schools can be oppressive environments. The [education] system is not geared for teachers. The political agenda for education has very little to do with goals of education and teaching and learning for teachers and students. I don't think teachers realize that. . . . They experience a lot of stress and a lot of guilt trying to do the best they can on a day–to–day basis. I spend a lot of time [in classes] trying to uncover some of the tremendous stresses and constraints and demands that hamper teachers and force them to see themselves and teaching in a way that is very oppressive. It is important for them to validate what they do individually and collectively, to value and respect themselves as knowers and learners as well as teachers. . . . I guess in some ways I assigned myself an advocacy role very early on in life and it just kind of stuck.*

A great deal of thought and attention go into the planning and creation of a safe physical and psychological environment that promotes learning and encourages students to achieve their potential. Although Ardra apparently does this effortlessly, this is not the case. She describes how she spends a great deal of time and energy ensuring the creation of a learning context in which "the process is the content" in the learning experience, and where learning and teaching "happen." Relationships, a critical aspect of learning, require a secure context in which to develop, and learning itself accelerates within an environment of safety.

> *Teaching and learning. . . are almost secondary to the focus on the creation of the context in which they can happen. I spend a lot of time thinking and worrying about how to help create a space for people within learning contexts so that they can have meaningful, productive learning experiences. The challenge connected with that is trying to find out what that means for each individual student. What it means for you could be very different from what it means to the next person, and that challenges me as a teacher.*
>
> *The learning context [needs to] allow people to feel comfortable, to feel safe, to take risks, to engage in a whole variety of ways, to be very active and interactive, to be such that learners can feel that they are taking charge of their own learning. . . . Sometimes it is difficult to try to facilitate the creation of a setting. . . . It is a bit of a roller–coaster ride. When the class is "singing" and everyone is interacting and the conditions are right. . . I find that tremendously rewarding and encouraging and. . . that is inspirational for me as a learner and a teacher. . . . There are some times, though, usually for the first two or three or four classes in a term when people are coming together and settling in, . . . [when] it is very difficult to trust in the process and be sensitive and responsive to the individual and collective needs of the group. . . . If [the context] does not feel right then. . . I worry about it a lot. On the other hand I think it is time and effort and*

worry well invested. Sooner or later, everything—the process and the class—just kind of takes care of itself. One of my courses this year provided a powerful example of what I mean here.

It was a large group (which makes a process-oriented course all the more difficult to facilitate) and, although things seemed to be going smoothly, I worried my way through the first seven or eight weeks. I was dissatisfied with the cohesiveness of the group and the level of interaction and relational learning taking place. I became very concerned over the length of time it was taking to build sufficient trust and confidence in the process I was trying to facilitate. There was a faint undercurrent of skepticism apparent in the group. Then one morning, one student responded to my usual open invitation for a discussion about personal issues associated with the research process. Her disclosure of dilemmas and concerns emerging from her research was an epiphinal point in the course. It was obvious to us all during that class that we, individually and collectively, had reached a turning point. The transformation was so obvious that it became a point of discussion toward the end of the class. As I slumped in my chair I shared with the group my overwhelming sense of physical and emotional relief that finally the group was "together" and there was newfound faith in and enthusiasm for the learning process I had been trying to facilitate. That event was probably one of the most powerful moments I have ever experienced in my teaching. It was palpable.

In a safe and productive learning context, relationships develop when based on mutual trust, a respect for different learning styles, and a commitment to learning. Learning, a dialectical process, requires the co–operation, independence, and responsibility of all the members in a learning situation, whether or not it occurs in a large or small group format. An oppressive environment hampers

learning because students refuse to take risks in the process. Consequently, learning becomes outer– rather than inner–directed.

Self–directed and Shared Responsibility for Learning

Ardra tells many stories about the deep-rooted themes of responsibility and autonomy in her life. One such story begins with her birth in December, the long-wished for daughter, her mother's "Christmas present." This incident had a significant impact on Ardra's life because it generated feelings of tremendous responsibility to "deserve this special status." Ardra's sense of responsibility and independence intertwines with the merit she places on self–directed learning. According to Ardra, growing up in a working class family, without much guidance but with high expectations that she "do well" in whatever she did, Ardra learned very early on to "figure things out" for herself. This emphasis on responsibility and autonomy in her own life has carried over to her teaching and characterizes her expectations for the students in her classes; she correlates them with the value she places on the process of learning. In our life history interviews and in her own writing Ardra makes numerous references to how, throughout her childhood, most of her time was spent engaged in solitary activities, "not for the results they achieved but because I loved the process of being one with the task, being alone with myself and my thoughts."

Ardra's pedagogy cannot be classified as "talk and chalk" or teacher-directed All students are responsible for their own learning, for ultimately they must answer the question, "Who is the learning for?" Ardra recalls one incident that makes explicit the connection between her value of self–direction and learning.

> *The students were choosing books [for a presentation] and I was explaining to them the purpose of the activity, and the format of the group presentations. At the end of the class, somebody put up her hand and asked, "Does this count toward our grade?" The question stopped me in my tracks. I*

thought, "What are you talking about? Of course not. Why would I interfere with your learning that way?" If I had had my wits about me I would have asked, "How different would the learning experience be for you if I placed a grade value on the activity?". . . . (Mine is not a typical class in that I don't break down different kinds of activities and attach a value to them, for example, 10% for a book report.) That incident prompts the questions, "Who is the learning for? Who is the class and the course for, and who are the activities for? And how does having a grade value attached to an activity influence learning?"

In another incident, Ardra elucidates her value on self–direction and responsibility. She articulates her disappointment when certain of her students failed to integrate these concepts in their learning repertoire afte. one of her semester–long courses. In an end of term discussion prior to Ardra's sabbatical leave, a few students raised concerns about their being able to complete a final assignment. They were concerned that Ardra would not be present in the event that they needed her. Whom would they consult should the need arise?

"Whom would you go to any other time? Who have been your resources and support all term?", I asked as I surveyed the twenty–five others in the room. I was frustrated, disappointed, and a bit hurt. It seemed, in retrospect, that the students thought that I was shirking my responsibilities to them. I saw their questioning of my availability while on study leave as a statement that I was not living up to expectations and responsibilities. In addition, they were concerned that they would not be able to complete the assignment to my satisfaction. The idea that the assignment was for me and not for them bothered me because all year I had repeatedly emphasized the importance of learning activities being personally relevant and meaningful. The fact that they were hesitant to take responsibility for their own learning and achievement disappointed me.

The twin themes of responsibility and autonomy pervade Ardra's pedagogy. They derive from her historical past and structure her expectation that students engage in self–directed learning. Ardra, as teacher, shares in the learning process; she challenges her students to look inward and affirm their unique experiential knowledge. They need to take responsibility for their own learning.

> *My major role as a teacher of teachers. . . that transcends any content or process, is to encourage teachers to challenge traditional ways of teaching and learning, and to value and respect themselves as knowers and as teachers and learners.*

Perspectives on Knowing, Teaching, and Learning

Certain interrelated epistemological themes are evident in Ardra's teaching practice: the value of experiential learning; the reliance on self as knower; and the role of narrative in meaning construction. In Ardra's classroom, everyone—teacher and student alike—is seen to possess valuable experienced-based knowledge which, when shared, contributes to everyone's learning. As a teacher, Ardra is not merely an information–giver and a deliverer of knowledge, although at times she performs those roles. Mainly, she facilitates the co– creation of knowledge that is rooted in the self and surfaces through an expression of intersubjectivity and reflexivity. Teacher and students alike participate in a life–long process of learning.

> *I very much believe in a process oriented, or experiential, approach to teaching and that also includes my work with students in a supervisory capacity or some other kind of facilitating role. I see myself as a facilitator, a guide, and very much a learner too. I think it is important for me to feel that I am learning in a teaching situation and, in fact, that is one criterion I use to judge the so–called "success," effectiveness, or quality of the teaching–learning interaction. . . . I approach my work with students as an opportunity to learn. . . in a whole variety of ways. . . . I am very passionately committed to teaching and to learning itself. . . . They are indivisible. . . . I see it as my responsibility to make an ongoing*

commitment to improvement of my teaching which means an ongoing commitment to sensitivity and responsiveness to the needs of learners. . . . That requires me to be a learner as well. . . . I very much believe that we come to any kind of learning situation with vastly diverse and rich experiences that inform that learning in very different ways. My experiences and my knowledge of a particular topic may be informed differently because I have had opportunities to focus my attention in some different ways. That is not to say that my knowledge is any better than anyone else's; it is just different, mainly due to different circumstances. I do not see it as my responsibility to only pass on what I know. My main responsibility is to try to facilitate others to first uncover what it is they already know and then to provide opportunities and resources (personal, experiential, literature, etc.) for them to enhance that knowledge. And when that knowledge is shared we all learn.

Narrative as a way of knowing has roots in Ardra's early life. Since childhood, she has used stories to make sense of her world. Family legends became an enduring aspect of the family's interaction. According to Ardra, beyond the day– to–day exchanges of routine chatter, telling stories was the main form of communication in her family. Indeed, even now, any family gatherings are dominated by the telling and re–telling of family stories.

I was an only daughter. There was a significant age difference between my brothers and me so I spent most of my childhood alone. My mother thought I was special so I was not allowed to play much with other kids. I spent much of my time drinking tea with my mother and her friends, sitting around a kitchen table. I listened to them talk and tell stories. That's how I came to view the world. When she got together with her friends, or in any kind of social context, her usual opening line was, "I'll tell you something better than that," at which point she would lapse into another story. That was her way of making sense, and because I

spent so much time with her, that's how I, too, learned to make sense of things. The role of story and narrative is so significant in my life; it is clearly reflected within the context of my teaching and researching with teachers. I encourage teachers to tell their stories and to make sense of their teaching by telling their teaching stories. I think it has to do with placing a value and respect on other than traditional forms of knowledge.

Narrative knowing, as an alternative construct, plays a significant role in Ardra's practice. Narratives provide a context for knowing, teaching, and learning. Throughout her classes, the students respond eagerly to the role of narratives as a form of communication in learning and researching. They connect stories with their realities and, through the holistic and rich descriptions, they make meaning of their experiences. The students describe vignettes of their lives and of their teaching and researching practice, and link these experiences in their personal and professional lives. One student related a conversation with her husband in which she tried to explain her experience of learning in Ardra's class, to better understand how the emphasis on process– oriented, experiential learning differs from traditional approaches to learning:

> My husband can't get past his own university experiences of sitting in lecture halls taking notes, studying from textbooks, and writing exams. When I first told him that we spend three hours talking about education and our own teaching he just raised his eyebrows and blinked in disbelief. When he sees how energized I am when I get home on Tuesday nights after a full day of teaching and a full evening of talking about it, he shrugs his shoulders and comments that there must be something to what we do here.

The precedence Ardra gives to process over product in her teaching and to the role of the self in the development of meaning are firmly rooted in her early history as a learner and meaning maker. She learned at a young age to listen, watch, and

gather information from a variety of sources and to put that information together in a way that made the most sense to her. That principle, albeit more informed, still guides her practice.

Researching Teaching: Connecting the Personal and the Professional

The themes explored in this paper are but a few of the many foundational constructs that emerged throughout our study, and the personal–professional connections elucidated here are but a few of those we uncovered. In this focused personal history–based account of Ardra's teaching practice, we reconstructed some of the elements of her personal history that find expression in her pedagogy—the beliefs, values, and perspectives firmly rooted in Ardra's early experiences which give shape and meaning to her adult self and her teaching practice. As we followed the narrative threads that emerged through our analysis, we became increasingly aware of the entangled nature of the personal and professional realms of our lives, and the importance of making those connections known to ourselves. Autobiographical or reflexive inquiry is one way of clarifying and comprehending the link between the personal and the professional.

> *To teach . . . is to engage as a person as well as a professional. Teaching is not a professional act divorced from the personal. That is not reality. . . .*
> *I value being reflexive; I spend a lot of time thinking about my teaching, about my research, and about who I am and what I do and why I do what I do, and its impact. . . . Doing that is how I define my work. It has had a very powerful impact on me as a person and, hopefully, as a teacher.*

Connecting the Personal and the Professional in the Academy: The Politics of Self-Study

We conclude this paper with a commentary by Ardra, from her dual perspective as research participant and educational researcher. She highlights the

challenge faced by teacher educator-researchers who make a commitment to self-study both as a form of professional development and as an alternative form of research.

My practice as a teacher, teacher educator, and educational researcher is firmly rooted in an (auto)biographical orientation. The assumptions both implicitly and explicitly expressed in this paper reflect this orientation. As a teacher, I engage in ongoing inquiry into my practice for purposes of enhanced understanding and ongoing professional development. As a teacher educator working with teachers and other educators, I promote similar practices, and for the same reasons. I conduct research with teachers and other educators which, while similar in form and substance to my professional development inquiry work, has an additional purpose and focus that is related to the production and advancement of knowledge–this latter role is defined by the academy as my most important one.

In each phase of the research that formed the basis of this paper I was aware of the value of this inquiry to me as a teacher and teacher educator. It enhanced my understanding of my teaching in ways that we would expecta similar kind of inquiry to enhance classroom teachers' understanding of their teaching. In short, the value of self-study as a form of professional development is unquestionable–a position both inherently valid and widely supported in the literature on teacher development, and more recently advanced in the literature on the teacher education professoriate (Knowles & Cole, 1994, 1995; Pinnegar & Russell, 1995; Russell & Korthagen, 1995).

Reading and re-reading this text, however, was not an easy experience for me. I worried over the perceived validity of the public representation of an analysis of my teaching. As a piece of qualitative research it is sound. Both in process and product it is inherently valid when judged against a set of validity criteria appropriate for work of its kind: the quality of its crafting; the nature of it communicability; and its

pragmatic value (Kvale, 1995). Indeed, Madeleine's representation of my teaching and our thematic representation are similar in form to representations of teachers' practice that I have written, and with which, as a researcher, I have been quite pleased. So, it was not the quality of the report that was the source of my discomfort.

My unease relates to the broad context within which the research is situated and the relationship between the individual/personal value derived from self-study and its perceived value as a contribution to the enhancement of knowledge about teacher educators and their work; in short, its legitimacy as a form of research. Although the public presentation of my work in the past occasionally has been dismissed as narcissistic and self-indulgent (see Knowles & Cole, 1995), this piece seemed to have the potential to engender even greater criticism of that kind. Products of self-study work in general are variously characterized by non-sympathetic academics as "narcissistic", "solipsistic", or some similar term that renders the work "unacceptable". Those who hold such views are, it seems, part of the preserving force that maintains the status quo of the academy.

Traditionally, the work of the academy has been concerned with the study of others; rarely has the research lens been focused inward. It is only recently that teacher educator-researchers have begun to systematically research their own practices and institutional contexts. And, in spite of the burgeoning interest in self-study (as represented in recent literature in the area and by membership in the Self-Study of Teacher Education Practices Special Interest Group of the American Educational Research Association, for example) self-study is still an alternative form of research that represents a challenge to the status quo.

Those who engage in self-study with the intention of publishing the products of such inquiry make a commitment to public disclosure. They lay bare for public scrutiny aspects of themselves, their practices, and their institutions. In so doing, they threaten the

academy's privileged, "untouchable" position. For, as Myers (1995) asserts, universities have built their reputations on the production of abstract, theoretical knowledge which is noted for its obscurity. Such knowledge production raises from the public few accountability questions. Self-study, by its very nature, renders individuals and institutions vulnerable and accountable. Research that is both personal and practical in its orientation not only endangers the reputation of the academy but also is part of a political agenda to challenge traditional conceptions of what counts as knowledge and research. Thus, it is argued, it is not in the best interests of the academy (and those who align themselves with the academy) to support such an agenda.

We, who are part of this new research movement, need to acknowledge and understand the institutional forces resisting efforts to change traditional notions of knowledge production and what counts as research. We cannot expect autobiographical studies of our practice to be considered as acceptable research when judged against academic standards rooted in a positivist tradition. But we also cannot be content to live in the academy with a "split-personality syndrome" (Korthagen & Russell, 1995, p. 188), that is, practicing one set of beliefs about knowledge production privately, behind closed doors, and presenting another in the public domain defined by the academy. And so we are left not with the question, Is self-study research? but rather, How do we, as a community of researchers committed to self-study both in theory and in practice, create a legitimate space for ourselves and our work both within our own institutions and within the broader educational and academic community? Resolution to this question is, at this point, in the broader development of teacher education, the paramount challenge facing autobiographical, self-study inquiry into professional practice.

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